

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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NEWS BRIEFS FROM THE BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Tuning in Wildlife

Knowledge about life habits of a number of species, including the coyote, certain rodents, and even game birds like the sharp-tailed grouse, has been difficult to obtain. Biologists' presence in the field during studies often frightens the animals so they flee or hide. Also, some animals are secretive and cannot be studied by biologists without some kind of aid.

One possible solution: the electronic remote monitoring system known as telemetry. A start in this direction has been made by biologists of the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife who are using electronic devices to study a variety of animals.

Essentially the electronic equipment includes a transmitter with either a beeping tone or a continuous tone, as well as a battery power source and a receiver with a directional antenna. Transmitter and power supply are placed on an animal so that its behavior is not restricted, and the kind of activity the animal engages in determines the type of signal picked up remotely by the biologist operating the receiver.

Some of the questions that BSWF hopes to answer with telemetry are:

- (1) Do grouse die or flee after areas are sprayed with certain pesticides?
- (2) How often do coyotes take the young of wildlife like antelope and the young of livestock like cattle and sheep?
- (3) How far will nutria move in search of food and thus become a nuisance to farmers?

A Squirrely Way to Stop a Parasite

Dwarf mistletoe, a close cousin of the Christmas kissing kind, is a parasitic plant that grows on conifers, girdling and eventually destroying them. But the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife may have found a good control to help foresters--using red squirrels to retard the growth of the killer. Field studies by the Bureau's Denver Wildlife Research Center show that these squirrels definitely find this parasite succulent. "On some sections of branches of one lodgepole pine tree examined, the squirrels had almost completely stripped the mistletoe from the infected area," the Denver Center reports.

Waterfowl Botulism Spread by Diseased Fish

It has long been suspected that fish play a part in the spread of waterfowl botulism, and the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has proved in the laboratory that diseased fish can transmit the disease to ducks. Mallards were permitted to feed at will on small carp injected with doses of toxin 17 to 20 hours earlier. Consumption of one or two fish induced mild to moderate signs of infection; when as many as four fish were eaten, the birds died.

Mystery Wolf

Bones of a mysterious wild dog were sent by the New York State Conservation Commission to biologists of the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife for identity. They turned out to be those of a gray wolf, an animal that had not been reported living in the State for almost a century. BSWF biologists speculate the animal probably wandered into New York from Quebec or Ontario--within the past 20 years or so.